

# White Paper

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Project Director: David R. Brigham

Institution: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

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**Final Report to NEH**

**and**

**White Paper**

**on**

**Grant No. PF-230350-15 to**

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA)

Supporting PAFA's

Works on Paper and Archives Suite Construction Project

(Grant period: October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2016)

**Submitted August 2016**

Project Director:

David R. Brigham, Ph.D., President and CEO



PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY  
OF THE FINE ARTS

***PAFA's Works on Paper and Archives Suite  
Construction Project***  
**NEH Grant No. PF-230350-15**  
**Final Report and White Paper, August 2016**

**NARRATIVE**

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) was awarded an NEH Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections Implementation Grant of \$250,000 outright plus \$50,000 matching, to support a storage expansion construction project beginning in October 2015 to provide a dedicated space for the storage and care of PAFA's Works on Paper and Archives Collections (a summary of these collections appears in the Appendix).

**Preface:** This project is an outgrowth of a 2013-14 NEH SCHC Planning grant that supported the evaluation of candidate spaces in PAFA's existing buildings for identification of potential for optimal storage conditions and passive energy savings through efficiencies in storage location and construction. The planning project, led by consultant Michael Henry of Watson Henry and Associates, began in November 2013. The final white paper on the planning grant, published in January 2015, is available here:

<https://securegrants.neh.gov/PublicQuery/Download.aspx?data=EbwGdSylkD7zoB3W75cvd%2bXST%2bWypC%2bITIXHwluvxkiMWt6m8gw%2fP2etbi4GeWTFXRVt6wvgTUBMakPAmahwnF7Q1lV6BdMGufghn%2f9iCKhtvhjNFSvNu%2b85En6KDVZS7robZ8TfhRfmEUiidZ58Q%3d%3d>

The white paper summarized the project's findings that formed the basis of the implementation grant application for which PAFA was awarded the grant for the project that is the focus of this white paper.

**Pre-Award:** At the time of the implementation grant award announcement in summer 2015, architecture firm Westlake Reed Leskosky (WRL) had completed plans for construction of the facilities on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of PAFA's Samuel M.V. Hamilton Building (see Appendix for Floor Plan). In concert with federal section 106 regulations, in early August 2015 PAFA posted a notice on its website for 30 days concerning alterations to the interior of this 1916 building, seeking public comment to be directed to NEH's Division of Preservation and Access. Pennsylvania's Bureau for Historic Preservation confirmed in a September 21, 2015, email that the Bureau's review of the project found no cause to believe that PAFA's collections storage construction project would cause any harm to the historic fabric of the Hamilton Building.

The exterior wall to the new collection storage room was completed during the previous summer (not part of the NEH project).

**Construction** of the interior of the collection storage area and related rooms began in October 2015



PAFA President and CEO David Brigham (far right) takes PAFA staff on tour of collections storage space in mid-September 2015, after the external walls had been built but prior to the main construction work on the facility, which commenced the next month.

and was finished by the end of December. Interior construction work included build-out of walls, installation of electrical systems, LED lighting, plumbing, and HVAC, and fit-out for all the facility rooms – collections storage, treatment, framing, unpacking & crating, study room, and the Archivist office.



Beginning of internal construction,  
mid-October, 2015



Above, outside glass-walled Study Room collections storage area, whose main entrance is the single open door seen at right.



Above, view showing entryways to main storage area (left) and to Preparation and Framing Room (right), as viewed from immediately inside main entrance to collections storage suite.



Main collections storage area as construction began,  
mid-October 2015

A standalone HVAC system was installed serving solely the collections storage room – a Bry-Air industrial dehumidifier that will allow for the temperature and humidity to be controlled year-round with a temperature goal of 60F degrees with 40% humidity. A separate HVAC system was installed serving only the related facility rooms adjacent to collections storage – treatment, framing, unpacking & crating, study room, and the Archivist office (a third HVAC system, not part of the NEH project, was installed in summer 2015 serving all other sections of the 5<sup>th</sup> floor including Library and classrooms). All the HVAC systems on the Hamilton 5<sup>th</sup> floor include humidification capability.

**Post-Construction:** Following completion of construction, all office furniture, flat file storage units in the collection storage room, and treatment tables for the support room were installed early in 2016 – these items were not part of the NEH construction project, but were essential to completion of the storage facility. Contents of PAFA's Archives and all of PAFA's art



works on paper were then moved to the new collections storage facility by the end of March 2016, marking the conclusion of the project.



Construction and move-in completed!  
April 2016



Through main doorway, view into reception area and Archivist's Office

Above, Study Room adjacent to collections storage room, as seen from the Elevator lobby (this is the first view that visitors have of the facility).



Preparation and Framing Room



Main collections storage area (flat files in foreground; archival shelving in background; hanging storage at right of photo)



Flat storage in foreground; hanging storage of art in background.



Archivist Hoang Tran pulling out a door of objects in flat storage.

PAFA's new archival collections storage facility has resulted in very significant improvements:

**Results - Proper Storage:** With the new facilities, PAFA is better able to steward its collection of historical records. The previous storage area's approximately 500 linear feet of shelving, 72 linear feet of wire racks, 65 linear feet of filing cabinets, and 10 flat file drawers were inadequate storage space for PAFA's records, and the Archives outgrew the allotted storage space which resulted in significant overcrowding. As a result, though the bulk of the collection

was stored in the original storage facility, archival materials were distributed to various places throughout the museum. Also due to storage issues, the backlog of unprocessed collections, piled 2 or 3 boxes high, jeopardized the integrity of the boxes and their contents.



Art works on paper in hanging storage.



Flat storage is used for both archival and art objects



The main archival storage area is compact rolling shelving.



Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection (photographs)

The new facility has provided a significant increase in storage space—nearly tripling the shelving storage and providing six times the flat file storage. All archival materials are consolidated into one central location. Moreover, eliminating the use of wire racks and filing cabinets also greatly improves the life span of the records since they are now properly housed and stored.

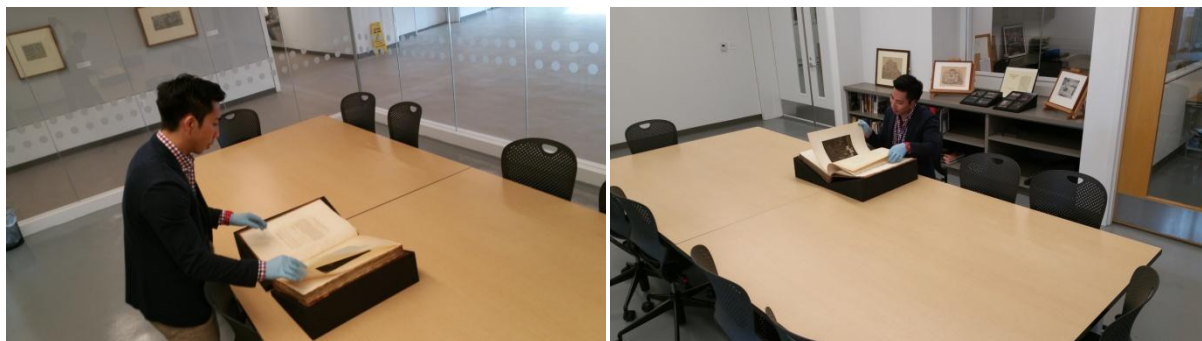


Death mask of artist Hugh Breckenridge (1870-1937), one of the more unusual objects in PAFA's Archives

**Results - Proper Environmental Control:** PAFA's ability to preserve the collection has increased dramatically with the addition of the state-of-the-art HVAC system. Previously, the temperature and relative humidity for the storage area in the Historic Landmark Building (HLB) was very difficult to control. For instance, the temperature was approximately 70F +/- 3F with a relative humidity (RH) of 45-50% +/- 3% depending on the season. Environmental conditions were well above the national standard of 65F and 40% RH. Current conditions meet national standards and best practices for storing both artwork and archival records—60F and 40% RH with minimal fluctuations (+/- 1F and 1% RH).

**Results - Improved Access:** PAFA's ability to provide proper access to the materials has also been positively impacted. Because the Archives storage vault was located in the basement and PAFA's study room was located in the Works on Paper Gallery on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of the HLB, archival records were subject to dramatic temperature and humidity changes when researchers and PAFA staff conducted onsite research. Materials did not have a chance to properly acclimate and were susceptible to moisture condensation, negatively affecting the collections' life expectancy. The construction of the new facility includes a study room and staff work areas that are adjacent to the storage vault with a slightly increased temperature of 68F and nearly identical 40% RH as the storage vault. The setting will dramatically minimize the chances of condensation build-up.

**Impact already:** Relocating the archives and works on paper to the Hamilton Building 5<sup>th</sup> floor has provided scholars with greater access to PAFA's renowned collections. Previously, accessing the collections in PAFA's Historic Landmark Building was much more difficult as there was not only insufficient space, but also the spaces were shared among museum staff for various purposes.



Archivist Hoang Tran examines rare book from the Archives, inside the Study Room adjacent to the collections storage room

Now in the new facility, a new study room (seen above) is dedicated solely for museum staff for seminars, lectures, classes, and hosting scholars. The study room includes a large conference table and seating for up to 15 patrons, an oversized ledge/shelf to study artwork, secure wireless internet connectivity, UV filtered glass walls, and dimmable LED lights that emit ultra-low UV.

In addition, PAFA's full-time Archivist Hoang Tran now serves as the central figure for managing accessing to the collections. Thus far, the Center for the Study of the American Artists has hosted a variety of patrons and groups:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 28 on-site researchers, largely PhD candidates but also university Art History faculty, curators, artists, genealogists, and biographers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 institutional visits: Woodmere Art Museum, Arkansas Arts Center group, Beijing delegation studying American museums and art schools, Whitney Museum of American Art, National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Library of Congress, Metropolitan Museum of Art (American Wing), Terra Foundation, and The Getty Conservation Institute.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 PAFA classes, 100 students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 seminars, 36 students/faculty</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 artists</li> </ul>	

**Impact going forward:** PAFA's construction on the Hamilton Building 5<sup>th</sup> floor includes not only state-of-the-art collections storage for Archives and works on paper materials, but also PAFA's Arcadia Fine Arts Library. All of these scholarly resources and spaces form PAFA's new Center for the Study of the American Artist. The Center will provide unprecedented access to important scholarly and art-related materials, further establishing PAFA's commitment in the field of American Art and art education.

Building off the success of the Center's new storage facilities, PAFA was selected to host the Getty Conservation Institute's Managing Collection Environments Initiative's two-week course using these facilities. The course will take place in June of 2017.



## **APPENDICES:**

### **Summary of PAFA's Archives and Art Works on Paper collections**

PAFA's archival and art collections reflect its history as the oldest museum and school of the fine arts in the United States. Starting in the early 19th century, PAFA designated secure storage for the preservation of important papers, arranged for convenient reference, leaving an almost complete series of records in many areas. In 1976, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, PAFA became one of the nation's first museums with professionally administered archives. PAFA's Archives and Special Collections now constitute over 800 linear feet of records, offering a variety of primary source records that include, institutional records, photographs, artifacts, exhibition records, student records, artist correspondence, financial records, audiovisual records, as well as rare art books and auction catalogs. These resources document the institution's rich history since its founding in 1805, providing unique insight into PAFA's historical legacy of training and educating artists and exhibiting and collecting art, essentially providing the earliest records of the development of the fine arts and art education in the United States.

PAFA's Arcadia Fine Arts Library collection (housed in a separate area on the same floor as the Archives/works on paper storage area) contains over 22,000 books, 2,000 full-text journals, and over 8,000 artist files. Together, the two resources are strategically positioned to expand the discourse and make important contributions to the understanding of American art and artists. These resources are available to researchers at the Archives and at PAFA's Library, both now located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of PAFA's Hamilton Building.

PAFA's works of art on paper collection (9,567 items) includes works dating back as far as 1768. Additionally, PAFA's photographs (1,401) include a large collection of photos (1,067) by Thomas Eakins and his circle. Together these two collections constitute more than ¾ of the items in PAFA's collection of artworks. In 2014, an NEH-funded study of PAFA's collections storage by Watson & Henry Associates recommended moving both Archives and works of art on paper storage to a new location with environmental systems appropriate for paper collections. A new collection storage facility housing both works on paper/photographs and archives was constructed with major funding from NEH in fall 2015 on the Hamilton Building's 5<sup>th</sup> floor, joining PAFA's Library and its new Illustration Major on the newly constructed floor. These new state-of-the-art collection facilities comprise nearly 10,000 square feet of a 25,000 sq. ft. \$45 million renovation.

## Hamilton Building 5<sup>th</sup> floor construction floor plan

 Archives and Works on Paper Storage are related work areas

